

it makes a more varied post than that of a London Matron. It was impossible whilst listening to Miss Stewart's paper not to feel that not only was the position of a Matron as head of the training school uppermost in her mind, but it practically predominated it, to the exclusion of those many other functions to which the Matron of a smaller training school must perforce attend. The actual duties will vary with the size of the hospital, the number of residents, and so forth, but, generally speaking, the Matron may be regarded as—

I.—The Principal Resident Civil Officer (not medical.)

II.—Head of the Nursing Staff.

III.—Head of the Domestic Staff.

In carrying out the duties of these several offices, which are yet one, the individuality of the Matron comes largely into play, for it is seldom you meet with the genius who is equally good all round. Some women are born organisers, but poor teachers as far as the scientific side of nursing is concerned, others are wonderfully good at the intimate details of domestic management, but have little grasp of the wider duties of government; some women are "born nurses" and find it hard to give attention or interest to any point that is not directly connected with the patients or wards, and so on. It is given to very few of us to be really great Matrons, to treat our office sanely and temperately as a whole, giving to each department its proper care and attention and importance. It is in her position as principal resident civil officer, in carrying out those details of general organisation and management placed in her charge by the committee, that the Matron most often comes in touch with the other officials, the Secretary, and the Medical Residents; and very great tact is often needed not to hurt the susceptibilities of those who have a perfect right to absolute authority in their own sphere. A mistake which is often made by an ambitious young Matron is to try to scoop in all authority, and hang all the keys on to her own girdle. That is a mistake and generally leads to disaster or "rows."

Always try to remember that other people love to have their innings, more especially if they are young; but be very tenacious of your legitimate rights, which are, in reality, your duties. The Matron will have a freer hand in some hospitals than in others, and it is the committee that ultimately apportions the executive work of the hospital, and it is to them, therefore, that the Matron should appeal if she is really hampered in carrying out her proper work, but, if possible, fight your own battles.

In some hospitals the Matron has to keep an excessive amount of books, and it is absolute folly, as is done by some committees, to arrange for the Matron to be responsible for a pile of account and store books that would tax the time and skill of a chartered accountant. Of course, proper accounts and so forth should be kept by the Matron; but her duties of general supervision, teaching and management are so important that it is the height of absurdity to regard her chief function as that of a bookkeeper, and to stultify the rest of her work for the sake of being able to furnish elaborate returns and statistics to hospital year-books.

As head of the nursing staff the Matron is on sure ground; whatever else she may or may not be, there is no doubt about this department, it is her own and provides her with an ample scope for work—and worry.

The simplest, most elementary duty, that of providing a constant stream of suitable efficient probationers is not very easy; never to have so many ill or so many away as to hamper the working of the wards is, with a limited staff, also not easy.

Then there are lectures to be provided, there are your own classes to be arranged for. Here I am most fortunate in the most willing and kind co-operation of the visiting staff, but I know that some of my sisters are not so fortunately placed. Then there is the ward work to be arranged and the times off duty. Now, as regards these same times off duty, I am out of touch with the majority of my colleagues, and think that the tendency is to an excessive amount of it during training. Let me at once say, that I know it is only in accordance with the tendency of the age, which is to intersperse one's working life with as much free time as possible, and I admit we are all children of our century. But at the same time I do feel that those three years of probation should be three years of probation and concentration, and no matter how many folds of tissue paper one wraps it up in the tendency is to make them less and less so. However, as I am talking of Matrons and not probationers, I will leave the subject for another time.

In County Hospitals the choice of Sisters is one of the Matron's most important duties, as there is no more important body of workers in the hospital. A Sister must not only be a good nurse, but more, much more, if she is to be efficient, and I have known many a good nurse a lamentable failure as the head of a ward. The question as to whether the Sisters should invariably be of one's own training is a debatable one. Personally, I infinitely prefer a mixture—some of my own training, preferably those that have been away, gained further experience and then returned—and others who have been trained elsewhere. It prevents a small hospital from becoming too narrow, and gives the probationers in training an opportunity of learning something of methods and views from other nursing schools. But no Sister should be retained in a County Hospital whose ideas of Sistership are bounded by charting temperatures, going round with the staff, and doing a few dressings. She must be able and willing to teach her probationers, to be herself the Head Nurse of the ward, to be a good ward manager, economical, and withal a tactful disciplinarian with the patients and not a frivolous fool with the residents. Then, having found your treasure, keep her, and do not worry the life out of her because she has some little fads that do not quite coincide with yours. Be exacting but be just. Demand a great deal from your Sisters, but trust them. Expect from them the exact fulfilment of the duties of their post, but let them also taste the sweets of office. Let the Sister of the ward be the Sister of the ward, with proper authority and position. If you are the colonel of the regiment, let her be the captain of her company, and you will find, I think, that the majority are well worthy of your confidence.

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